

EARLY MEMORIES OF THORPDALE SOUTH

by

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(1872 - 1947)

I have just been looking at a picture on the wall, a picture that I never turn away from without feelings of love & reverence. It's a picture of my old home, built by my Father, John Lloyd; one of the earliest settlers in Thorpdale South, then known as Narracan West the name being changed at a later date.

The house was built in 1878/79. It is no modern villa as you can tell not even artistic, with a wing on either side, wash house & mans room detached. As to inside conveniences, they were conspicuous by their absence. No tap, no water supply to the kitchen, no sink to carry dirt water away. I smile even now when I think of the trip we had to make to get every bucket of water for the house. The length of the kitchen (water was generally wanted at the fireplace end) through a little porch, along a verandah extending along the front of the house, to the tank at the side.

As for a bathroom, I do not think there was such a thing in the whole of the district. Never the less we bathed, using a large tub in the privacy of our bedroom or as occasionally happened, the rest of the family being out, the large tub would be carried into the sitting room or kitchen & there before a glowing fire with ones clothing hanging over a chair to warm, we had our bath, but such luxury could not often be indulged in, as with a number of people nearly always about it was not possible. I often thought in my young days that if I had the plan of a house, I would have a fireplace in the bathroom, for I always thought a bathroom a cold dreary place, not in the bathing part, but in the drying. However I never did possess a bathroom with a fireplace & if I had, I would have probably thought it too much trouble to light a fire for such a short time of unpleasantness.

Young folk would laugh at the idea of a tub for ones bath, but we considered we kept ourselves reasonably clean. Also in those days there was not so much talk about B.O. & we did not have the wireless stating the wonderful value of Lifebouy soap, the use of which it is impossible to do without unless one wishes to be objectionable to ones friends. These inconveniences were not of so much importance in those old days for there was usually a daughter or two or three, to assist the mother with her household chores. Girls did not consider it imperative to go out into the world to earn their living, & the fathers took a pride & pleasure in being able to keep their girls at home; liking to see them around & also taking a pride in their household accomplishments. I do not think the girls objected to being at home, unless, as sometimes happened, the parents were unable to support the girls, then they had to resort to domestic service in Melbourne or work as dressmakers in I always loved my home & never wanted to be away for long. When we began our life as pioneers there were 7 of us in the family, 4 daughters & 3 sons. Our parents could be considered middle aged, & a happy home we had, it seems to me now, with no worries or sorrow, or if a little difficulty came up, there was always Father or Mother to ask advice from & they always seemed to know the answer.

If I were writing a book I would describe my sisters as pretty, beautiful & charming, & my brothers as handsome, intellegent & stalwert, but as I'm not, I can only say that each individual seemed to me to possess just the face to suit that particular one. On looking back, I think my parents had no reason to blush for the appearance of their children. We were healthy & the girls had fresh colouring, unaided by powder or paint.

Ah! Those dear faces & precious personalities, most of them nothing but a memory now. The picture on the wall too, is all that is left of the home & garden, excepting a few worn out fruit trees that have forgotten how to produce fruit, they are about all that is left of the orchard, small 'tho it was, we were so proud of it when we first picked apples & peaches off our own trees, no fruit has ever tasted so well since. The house has long since passed away, in fact it was burnt down by accident many years ago, as for those tall trees at the back of the house, I do not think one remains to tell of the forest that was once there. Those trees that used to fill my heart with dread & fear when a wind storm raged through their branches, bringing down many of the giants, blown up by their roots. I was always terrified that one night

one would fall on the house, crushing all the family. I seemed to think we would all be killed outright, & Mother & Father would be quite safe they would go straight to Heaven! I was not so sure about the rest of us!! Some of the trees that had been left standing could have reached the house if they fell, I had heard my brother say so. Father was very optimistic about these trees, persuading himself that the house was safe. I used to wonder at him for not having them down, I know now it was the thought of the litter they would make on the few acres which had been cleared with such long hard work. However it was not so very long before the dangerous trees were felled.

How well I remember those evenings, with the family gathered round a good fire, reading or stitching & talking, with a large plate of apples & another of walnuts on the table beside us. It seems now so peaceful & happy, no care of life before us with all sorts of possibilities. We generally retired early. About 9p.m., Mother would reach for the Bible never far from her hand, & if ever a woman lived near to the teachings of that Book, my Mother did; she would read out of one of the Gospels & Father would offer up a short prayer, asking for protection from danger, seen & unseen, & thanking God for the loving care taken of us through the day, also praying that at last, at the end of our lives, we would all meet together around the Throne of Grace. I placed far more dependance on my Father's prayer for protection, when those winds blew than I did on my own, 'tho I prayed as earnestly as I knew how while lying in bed listening to the wind, that made a noise like thunder & now & then a crash, as a big tree would be uprooted. In spite of the terror that the big trees filled my childish heart with, they had a fascination for me, & their passing caused me a feeling of regret. They had held their own for so long, had braved the storms, & were so majestic & now at last had succumbed to the puny hand of man.

Notwithstanding, when the timber was cleared away, & more & more clearing was done, the hills & valleys that had been hidden, appeared & the district took on the appearance that makes it & surrounding parts, Mirboo Childers, Thorpdale & Narracan, most picturesque & interesting. This was not completed without a lot of hard work & heartache, headache & backache I dare say. I wish some of the old pioneers could see it now perhaps they can, they would have a feeling of satisfaction that their efforts had been worthwhile.

I think my Father must have had an adventurous spirit that made him leave England years before, to try his fortune in a new country. Then later in life, to venture out once more & try his hand at pioneering. The fact that there were sons fast growing up & it being important that they be helped into some useful honest way of living with, perhaps, something worthwhile in the not too distant future.

I think, however, before I carry on with our simple life at Narracan West (or Thorpdale South), I will write a little about our old home at Coburg, the place in which I first saw the light. Coburg was at that time a village about 6 miles from Melbourne, a rather funny little place I think, as well as I can remember it. There were farms around about I know, I suppose that they were small ones. My Father had a small place about 5 acres I think, consisting of a large garden in which grew flowers & fruit trees. There was a summer house & a fish pond, but whether there were any fish in the pond or mosquitos in the summer house I do not know. You see I am now writing of my memories & impressions of being 5 years old. The first I can remember of myself is a little girl with rosy cheeks, dark eyes & a plump little figure. Fat they called me when I went to School, to my great disgust, for to be fat seemed somehow a disgrace. The first memory of my Mother is her sad worried face. She was distressed at the news of her brother's death, he had been killed in a timber yard accident, & had left a young wife & 2 small children to mourn his loss. Of course I was too young to understand this great trouble, I was sorry to see my Mother in tears but I'm afraid I was more concerned about some new blue dresses & white straw hats trimmed with blue forget-me-nots, which had just been bought for my sister & self. These had to be put aside for us to put on mourning for the lost soul for whom we had no particular love. A foolish custom, this going into black, especially for children but it was done in respect to the memory of the lost one.

I suppose this sadness of my Mother caused me to think that the big world outside our front gate was a pretty troublesome one; if you keep inside the garden gate & had it securely locked you were safe & happy but once outside, onto the road that lead to School, you never knew what might happen - drunken men, perhaps a strange cow or horse, but think worst of all was the old gander, his wife & family we used to encounter just at the corner of the road (Gaffneys Road). The gander used to stretch out his long neck & with his wife & family, give vent the most awful sounds, my sister used to say, "Keep away from the gander but I was afraid the gander would not keep away from me. There was on consolation, along this road there was a large patch of sour grass growing, with which we children would refresh ourselves, I guess we did not eat very much as it seemed to do us no harm. We also had to pass jail, Pentridge, on our way to School; the high stone wall filled me with fear, I knew bad men were locked up in there & my brother said I could not get out for there were men with guns who would shoot them if they tried to escape. I felt sorry for these men, especially as my brother told me that they had to sleep on the stone floor of their cell with a stone for a pillow & dry bread to eat every day except Christmas Day when they had plum pudding. One man being so thrilled with the unusual fare, that he ate too much & died.

It was comforting to get back to our home after School, to our garden with its lovely perfumes, which I seem to remember more than the flow scented verbena, honeysuckle, rosemary, these scents, even now, carry me back to the old days. Besides the garden there was the field, where our cow Daisy & our old horse Tom spent a good deal of their time; so of the time of course was spent in the yard where they were fed with hay or something dry & Daisy was deprived of her milk. Old Tom had a trick of opening the yard gate & getting into the garden.

It was about the time I began to remember these events that my Father began to think about leaving our home & taking up land. The fact that my eldest brother had been caught smoking a pipe behind a haystack on a nearby farm filled my Mother with concern for the morals of her boys & she thought it was time they had something to do to keep them out of mischief. She became very anxious to get the boys away from the temptations of town life, Melbourne being only 6 miles away. Going on the land seemed to be a desirable thing to do. Girls being considered able to thrive anywhere, town or country, & to arrive at a respectable maturity under any circumstances.

There must have been a good deal of discussion as to where to settle the family. The Riverina, I know being one area thought of, which to my childish imagination, seemed to be somewhere in the vicinity of the North Pole. Gippsland was, however, decided on, & as there was land thrown open for selection in the Narracan Shire, my Father went to have a look at it & to have it pegged out & fixed up. He had one or two trips up there & took my Mother & brothers to live in a bark hut in the middle of the forest, my little sister had to go too. My sisters, one brother & myself stayed behind in a rented house for the time being. A great friend of my Mother's came along & insisted on my sister Maggie who was a great favourite of hers, going to stay with her. I do not know how long we stayed. Not long I daresay.

Father had got some sort of house up, that would cover all the family. It was not furnished, no floor or ceiling, but the rain could not come in. We had to put up with makeshift beds & very little comfort until the roads were fit for the bullock teams to get through. At last the team arrived & with it our furniture, even a china doll about which I was rather anxious, as it seemed such a long way & I was afraid she would never arrive safely.

However I am getting ahead of my story, I am writing of being in our new home without giving an account of how we got there. Father came down for us. The line from Melbourne to Sale had only got as far as Oakleigh. We travelled from Coburg to Oakleigh by coach. The road must have been very rough as we children said the wheels went "Bump, Bump" all the time & we had a few bruises to show, but we were excited for it was the start of a wonderful trip. Then the train trip, to be allowed to sit at the train windows & watch the trees & grass fly by. We had

never been very far from home before & here we are, all going to a new place. We arrived in Moe at last & were met by brother Jack with horse & cart. My eldest sister was greatly disgusted, his clothes were mud splashed & his hat was embroidered with holes, which he had cut out to hold slugs for his gun. He needn't have worn that hat, but he did so to tease my sister, who was at the age where she felt it her duty to sit on younger brothers & sisters. I think we must have had a picnic at a creek, but am not quite sure & there is no one to ask. Before we had got any great distance something happened, broken shaft I think. What it was it meant we could not go on. Fortunately some horsemen came up & they had a spare horse, so with our horse from the cart, we slowly proceeded. Father, my brother Jim & I were on one horse, me in front of Father with Jim behind. It must have taken a long time for us to go from Moe to Narracan. At Narracan East we pulled up at a store kept by Mr. John Savige who many years later became my Uncle in law. We had a cup of tea there & then went on to Narracan West (Thorpdale South now). It was getting dark as we went on & for the first time in my life I had a feeling of awe, altho' I did not know the name of the feeling, but the trees were so high & the scrub so dense on either side of the track & the sky & stars so high & far away, but my Father was there with his arms around me & he seemed a wonderful protection. We arrived at our new home at last & Mother met us at the door & had a steaming hot meat pudding for us I remember. I did not notice the bare walls & lack of conveniences, I guess if I had been older I would have thought it most uncomfortable & unhomelike. We got to bed as soon as possible & Mother knew how tired we were after the long trip & the excitement. Our beds altho' they were bunks were comfortable, 'tho something happened to the one my 2 sisters were sharing & it closed up on them & one of my brothers had to come to the rescue & extricate them.

Next morning we had a better opportunity to see what the place was really like. Tall trees all around, many 365 feet in height, 60 or more of the giants had to be felled for the safety of the house, & many were still lying around, along which we children soon learned to run. There was a lovely bank of tree ferns in front of the house, also sassafras trees one being of great age, with streamers of moss hanging from its branches. There was a pretty little spring at the bottom of the garden surrounded by tiny ferns, it had risen in a hollow where a large tree had been blown over from the roots. This spring was very important to us as we depended on it for our water supply until such time a tank could be brought from Melbourne 80 miles away & bad roads as well. Later we had a pump to bring water from the spring but it was not a great success. However in those days before the trees were cleared, the rainfall was such that one tank was deemed sufficient, 'tho we used to catch water in 2 large barrels made of wood. I must say, before I forget, that great

deal of valuable timber was ruined by ringbarking the trees. It was not thought that the timber would be the main source of income for some years, this had to be learnt amongst so many other things.

I do not know how we would have managed in those early days, had we not had a small but adequate income from property in Melbourne, 4 or 5 hours. Our wants were small & a portion of our living produced milk, butter & vegetables. Every woman baked her own bread, not only from an economic point of view, but there was no baker to depend on. For a time people killed their own beef, one selector killing a bullock & the neighbour taking a share, & next time another man would take his turn. Very soon a butcher used to come around from Narracan once a week. You got your supply for a week & made it last. I suppose there would be a good deal of waste, but as I was not the housekeeper these trifles did not worry me.

There was no school, so for 2 years we played around & ran wild. My brother Fred gave us some lessons in the evenings, good patient fellow so when a school finally did start, we were up to average. A Mechanics Institute was built in which we had our school, public worship, concert debating club & any sort of public meeting. Before that we had church in our sitting room, with a blazing fire going all the time. On one occasion, the Ministers gown was blown out towards the blaze & Mother

being afraid he would catch fire, interrupted the service to ask him to move further away. I wish I could remember the name of this minister. When the Hall was built we began to have regular Church services, Church of England one Sunday, Methodist the other. Services were general in the morning & we always had quite a crowd over to our place for dinner & to remain for the afternoon. There was no dairying then, only a house cow or two to attend to.

Nothing of importance happened for a while, except that conditions around the house improved. Walls were lined & papered, wooden floors took the place of earth, with bag coverings. We even had what would now be called a lounge room, then called a parlour. a room with a carpet (a bit worn) comfortable chairs, piano, a round table, quite a comfortable little room. No fireplace as this room had been intended as a bedroom, but we really did not miss a fire as we were only allowed to use this room when we had visitors or to have a sing song around the piano some evening. The best room in those days was not meant for the family to get comfortable.

A few years hence, this room was made into a spare bedroom & the kitchen turned into a sitting room which we all enjoyed the comfort of. I have not mentioned the long bark torches we used to make to light us at night if there was no moon. I was still too young to go out at night but some of the young folk used to go to one another's homes to learn dancing; there were 2 young men who could dance & instructed the other One of them as a favour taught me to Polka, my head about level with his waist.

At last the much desired railway line was opened up; a branch line from Moe to Thorpdale, our nearest railway until then was Trafalgar 9 miles away. The nearest station now was only 2 miles away & there sprang up around it a new township, Thorpdale. I must say that a number of the new people who came to the new town were not very desirable, not of the same class as the old pioneers. There were shanties around & a good deal of drink indulged in, which made our entertainments not nearly so select as they had been hitherto. The timber trade began to flourish & 3 sawmills sprang up, one on part of the selection that belonged to 2 of my brothers. About this time my Father made the home part of the land over to my brothers, just reserving about 17 acres for himself, Mother & we 3 girls. The reason for this was that he was rather a delicate man & thought that he would not live long & did not want the boys to have to wait until his death for what he intended to be their share. He had the pleasure of seeing them married & settled before his death on 15th September 1893. The railway line was opened in 1888.

Now followed a time of prosperity, my brothers had a nice little income one married, & the other did likewise 3 years later. Both had comfortable pretty little homes, more up to date than the dear little pioneer home I have not mentioned that the name of our home was "Glen Usk". Usk being the name of a little river near my Father's birthplace in Wales.

After the railway came there were 2 new stores so that our food supplies were more easily obtained, 'tho at Thorpdale South there was a store of sorts where you could get most of your groceries if you waited long enough, or your wants were simple. In the very early days goods came from Melbourne, a year's supply at a time. 12 bags of flour & I don't know how many of sugar, raisins, currants etc.

In a year or so, the men learned that the trees could be split into rails & palings & Thorpdale S., Childers & nearby were busy felling & splitting. Carting them by wagon into Trafalgar, a long job but in summer my brother used to take 5 loads a day. There were several teams from one district. It was while driving his team home from Traf. that my brother Jim met with a serious accident. A flighty new mare, Jill by name, was startled by something & bolted, throwing Jim. He struck his head & received concussion & injured his hand. Father was nearby & a litter was made & the other teamsters bore him into Trafalgar & thence by train to Melbourne. Father went with him to the Melbourne Hospital where he was so ill his life was despaired of. After some days the telegrams we at home were receiving became more hopeful & by & by a steady improvement was announced, but it was a long time before he was well enough to come home. In fact he never properly recovered & to this day he is not quite as he should be.

When all this happened, my sister had been married over a year, I know she & her little son were visiting Mother at the time. My brother Jack was also married & living on the land Father had selected for him. Mother went to Melbourne & she & Father spent most of their time at the Hospital, where they were allowed to help minister to Jim's needs, also to lend a hand as was always her nature, to help other patients. When I think of those days when people sprang to help others, I say to myself "Ah, those were the days, when people forgot to be selfish". When I think of my Mother called up in the night, to go miles sometimes, on foot or riding a horse, to help bring a little stranger into the world & to stay until someone came to look after the mother. She never refused to help. There were no Doctors or Nurses in the district & altho' Mother was not much over 40 at the time & had no nursing experience before she went to Gippsland, she had made up her mind that in a new place, it was her duty to help those around her to the best of her ability, so off she would go, her heart in her mouth & a prayer on her lips, to earn the gratitude of the people who would have been in trouble & may have died without her help. Fortunately the mothers & babies always lived, except in one case, where the poor little mother had no right to be away from Melbourne at such a time; & whose Doctor had told her months before, to be close to medical help when her time came. The husband, selfish thing that he was, did not insist on her going to where she could have help, I suppose it was a case of L.s.d. & he had been used to seeing her pulled through on such occasions & he thought she would again. Anyhow it was her business, not his. My Mother tried all she could to persuade her to go to Melbourne but she would not go. When the time came Mother went to help, but the poor little thing died & was buried not far from her house. Her husband put a rail fence around her grave but in time it rotted away & now I suppose it would be impossible to find the spot. The husband married again in a few years time. All the district were upset over the death & thought the woman's life may have been spared, had her husband considered her more. After this death on 30th September, my sister was very ill after the birth of her first baby on 2nd November, then my brother's accident soon after Christmas. I always remember those 3 events. I wish I could remember the year of the land boom, but I think it must have been about the time of the line coming through. Then the following year all but one or two banks in Victoria stopped payment. Father & brothers had money locked up for years, but eventually got it back. The following year there was a great depression in Melbourne, but these things did not worry me as my friends did not appear to suffer to any great extent.

Then the years flew past, & my 2 sisters & myself were growing into young womanhood. We were seldom all 3 at home together, as our eldest sister was getting quite a young family & as her husband was a civil engineer, & away from home quite a lot, one or the other of us used to stay with her. She was glad of our company & it was a change for us, but we were always glad to get back to our own home again.

I must not overlook our Dorcas Society, there were about 7 young women & we used to meet at different homes to sew for different Homes in Melbourne. Such Homes were always asking for clothes for destitute children. We met once a fortnight & sent away a good many bundles of clothing; all the people used to donate to this. Once a year we would hold a Tea Meeting at which the local band (we had a band of young men) used to play selected & received complimentary tickets for the Tea. After the meeting was cleared away we had a lecture by someone who had come from Melbourne. I say that my sisters & girlfriends did all the cooking for these occasions. These meetings were very much enjoyed & in connection with them & with our Mothers we had a little debating society, we wrote essays & discussed them or gave readings. I'm sorry to say this soon fell through, it was a pity, for it would have been instructive.

At this time our brothers were progressing well on the land. Mother was speaking to a friend & saying how glad she & Father were that they had come onto the land & that it had turned out a success. The lady replied "Yes, for the boys, but what about the girls? They will never meet any one they can marry" My Mother only smiled, she was no match maker & felt if it pleased God that we should marry, some suitable men would be sent all

We did marry eventually, & ere that came about, had had some little attention paid to us by the youth of the district. I remember 2 young sons of the local butcher paying my sister & self such attentions as the presents & offers of escort to some function or other. My brother once remarked he approved of butcher boys being interested in the fami as it was the means of procuring a good roast for Sunday dinner. We did not take these matters seriously, nor did they, for they married at an early age, other girls.

At this time my inclinations did not aspire to matrimony at all; to voluntarily take on a state of existence which was shrouded in uncertainty with new cares & responsibilities. The bearing & training of children, about whom there was no guarantee that they would be either pretty or interesting. To be dependent on a man other than my Father for the very bread I would eat, did not suit my independent spirit at all. I would sometimes hold forth, broom or duster in hand, for if I had waited until my work was finished I would have lost the gist of what I had to say, & they (the Family) would have been the losers of my wise remarks. My Mother would smile & tell me that in a few years I would have modified my opinions. My Mother was a wise woman.

I now come to the time when we had the greatest sorrow of our lives so far, the death of our much loved Father. He had always been somewhat delicate, but I always thought of him living to a grand old age. He passed away 15th September 1893, having been ill for 5 weeks with bronchitis, & it made a great difference in our home life, for we all loved him dearly. He was an upright, sensible, clever & good lovable man. He had a natural gift for public speaking. If the subject was dear to his heart, he would rise & speak with such warmth that if he did not convince his opponents of his views, he would have claimed their interest & attention. He used to speak at the Debating Society, where the topics of the day were Home Rule for Ireland, Free Trade & protection of Women's Rights. The Club was kept up for years & it was a pity when it fell to rest as it was a source of instruction for the young folk. My dear Father had such an influence for good, not only in his own family but through the district. An influence that was there without a great noise. A depression seemed to fall on our home & stay there for years. Mother felt the loss greatly & I know now that the sorrow caused a shock to her nerves & she seemed to be always in a ferment of worry, often over things that were not important. I'm afraid we were not of very much comfort to her, our main concern was to keep anything of a worrying nature away from her. About this time the timber began to run out, hastened by the careless management of the mill operators. The litter on the ground caused by indiscriminate timber felling made it impossible to start dairying. There had to be much cleaning & attention paid to the land before grass could be planted & people had to live of their savings & what little they could earn by splitting trees that had been rejected by the mill. Mother worried about her boys, but in reality it was only a case of readjustment. My 2 brothers had no liking for dairying, so cleared up the land somewhat & sold out. They took up a newsagency business at which they succeeded quite well. My eldest brother stayed on the land. He had had more forethought in clearing as he went along & combining a little dairying with timber, so he was better prepared for what was coming. About this time a young man, who had come out from England sometime before to see something of Australia, had been working with my brother. He was Harry Woodhouse, & he asked Mother's consent to his engagement to my sister Maggie. They had been attached to each other for a long time but Father & Mother did not approve of him altogether, & he being aware of the fact, had agreed to wait until he had something besides his affection to offer. The main reason for their disapproval however, was not that his lack of prospects alarmed them, nor anything against his character, but he came from a consumptive family. Father felt that Maggie may be left a young widow with small children, this he felt would be too hard a fate for his Maggie, who was a gentle girl. Mother gave her consent, thinking they were old enough to know the risk they were running. With many prayers for their future, Harry set out for the Western Australian goldfields & altho' he did not come home with a great deal of money, he was able to start a small

A little wedding was held in our sitting room & my sister Alice & I were bridesmaids, with our brother Jack giving the bride away. It was sad as Maggie was going so far away. They made a success of their lit business & a few years later when Harry came into some money from his mother in England, he built a very nice comfortable home. There they lived for many happy years. Harry did not inherit consumption but but had moderately good health. My dear Maggie died of lung cancer leavin her husband to mourn her.

About a year before this wedding, the great event that was to alter m life took place. My dark eyed lover came riding out of space, (space being only as far away as Narracan) & bore me away on horseback? Perh you are expecting to hear? No, it was not as quickly done as that; I h first to be won. I must say here that horses had quite a lot to do wi lovemaking in those days. Faithful old things, they could be trained travel very close together & seemed to be in absolute sympathy with their riders. When this young man told me of his love & I had answe in the manner that he wished, I also told him that I could not consid myself engaged until he had spoken to Mother & obtained her consent. H agreed that this was only right & proper, but as this experience was an absolutely new one he looked at it in the light of an ordeal. I sug he write, Mother being away from home at the time. Write he did! Moth came home in a week or so & no mention was made of any letter, so I made enquires, & found that no letter had reached her. Now I had to p the way myself as my beloved was visiting me that evening. I met him & told him of the duty still in store. Then my sister Alice & I retir giving him $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour to have his talk with Mother. We came in at the appointed time & found Mother holding his hand & smiling through her tears & he looking, well I'm not going to say how he looked, that is our business, his & mine. A month later his letter turned up, it had

been overlooked at the Thorpdale Post Office. I must say that the peo in charge were more than a little careless. Mother was not interested in the letter now, so I claimed it & still have it amongst some littl treasures I hold dear. We were engaged for 2 years.

Before we were married the most disasterous bushfire that had ever occured came to our district. For months the weather had been hot, eve thing was dry, just ready for a fire. The fire started somewhere nea Childers & raged through the country right to the coast. The flames seeming to carry everything before them, which they would have done, except the hurricane force winds altered their course. Afterwards it seemed a miracle, some places were burnt while others were saved. Man of the old settled farms, houses, sheds, cattle & horses were burnt. Peoples lives were in danger but fortunately there was no loss of lif as has occured in fires of later years. My brother Jack lost his hous & sheds, which were insured. Mothers house was saved but sheds & fenc were burnt. Sister Alice spent a night at a neighbours place helping them fight the fire, pulling water out of a nearly empty well & throw it around, often over themselves. A report got around that the family & Alice had perished, but it was not true. We were all in danger for days, the prayed for rain did not come. One Wednesday, which was afterwards called Red Wednesday, the whole sky was red with the refle of flames on the pall of smoke & we all wondered if the whole country would burst into flames. The damage was enormous, homes, fences & stc which had taken so many years to gather together, all swept away. It was January 1898. This decided Mother to let her little house & go to live amongst her daughters & relations. Alice went to Western Austral to help Harry & Maggie in their business.

I was married on 7th April 1898 & on the day I was married & left my old home, I knew I was leaving it forever & starting a new life in Narracan. But that has nothing to do with my story. The pioneer life was now over.

My dear sister Alice has not figured in these pages very much, but sh was in our lives, a bright attractive girl, with more admirers than any of us. Her love affairs did not lead to anything of a serious nature until later, so there has not been so much to say about her. I felt very sad on my wedding morn, feeling it was farewell for ever, but my lover was by my side.

What I will do with these pages I know not. Maybe I will look them over & alter here add there, or I may burn the whole thing & not leave it to my grandchildren. But whatever I do, the writing of this has been a pleasure. I have relived the old days, not then so full of care & anxiety. I have been a girl again in my imagination, have felt my dear ones near me again in the old home, almost embraced them & it is with a pang of regret that I leave them.

ANNIE MATILDA SAVIGE (nee Lloyd) was born in Coburg in 1872 and died in Warragul in October 1947: These memoirs were found by her daughter Gwen Ryan (nee Savige) after her mothers death, & were typed by her granddaughter Margaret Perdriau (nee Ryan) in Australia Bi-Centenary Year 1988.

Annie's dark eyed lover was Sam Savige, they had a daughter Gwendolyn & a son Lloyd. Gwen had a daughter Margaret who has Geoffrey (1964) & Kathryn (1966) Perdriau. Lloyd had a son Lloydie who has Gregory & Allison. daughter Daisy who has 2 sons Phillip & Anthony Mayer.

JOHN LLOYD (Annie's loved Father)

John Lloyd was born in Wales in 1825 where he learnt the trade of Farrier. He came to Victoria in 1854 & had a business in Elizabeth St Melbourne, 1856-1875 when he retired to live in Coburg for 5 years. He moved to Gippsland & selected 320 acres of land now valued at 10p an acre, on which he conducted general & dairy farming & had 40 head of stock. Mr. Lloyd was married in 1852 to Miss Eliza Coggin & has a family of seven children. He was one of the first Coburg Shire Council on which he sat for 4 years, also one of the early Narracan Shire Councillors on which he sat for 5 years.

Obituary Notice in Local Paper
September 1893:



